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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the application of compressed video technology in distance education programs in the training of teachers of the deaf. Compressed video transmits voice and video via high speed digital telephone lines to connected classroom sites and is capable of delivering coursework statewide. Instructors can monitor several sites simultaneously or focus on individual members of the class at the same time that individual sites have the capability of viewing other sites, thus permitting an exchange of group information. Among advantages of this technology are the active involvement of students, use of guest speakers from any location, the ability of students from different locations to work together cooperatively, and a means for self-evaluation by the instructor. (DB)

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Distance Learning Through Telelinking

by

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Many teacher preparation programs in the field of deafness encompass a large geographical service area. It is imperative for program faculty to provide quality training to students who are located in areas a considerable distance from campus. In an effort to accommodate these prospective teachers and "reach out" to other individuals, different forms of technology are currently in use. Computer courses, satellite classes and interactive TV (compressed video) are considered a few alternative ways to address the issue. The program goal is to meet the needs of students by providing access to instruction while enhancing the learning experience.

Compressed video is a system that transmits voice and video via high speed digital telephone lines to connected classroom sites within the region. This communication vehicle allows for the delivery of coursework statewide and it provides students with an opportunity to participate in the basic design and structure of an on-campus classroom.

Instructors have the flexibility of monitoring several sites simultaneously or focusing on individual members of the class. In addition, sites have the capability of viewing other sites, permitting an exchange of group information and ideas essential to the educational process. Often, successful teaching on two-way television is measured by the level of active, not passive, involvement students have in class assignments during the semester.

Application of compressed video technology requires a change in teaching behaviors and strategies for some professionals. The studio setting is not conducive to a traditional lecture format, and if used continuously, it is a very ineffective method for conveying information. Also inherent in the transmission of compressed video, is an

impersonal aspect that dictates the inclusion of a variety of activity based instructional and multimedia options. Approaches that incorporate students as responsible participants such as group or panel discussions, interviews, debates, role playing, performance events, and short demonstrations or reports stimulate interest and encourage interaction. Furthermore, to augment the presentation of a topic, visuals, photographs, and real objects can be easily displayed on network devices. The integration of slides, videotapes and computer generated graphics also expedite the teaching of content through this medium and promote retention of the subject matter. To interface the appropriate tools (power point, document or video camera) and curriculum materials, advanced preparation is crucial. Smooth transitions between these different components during the class session will contribute to the overall understanding and comprehension of the students. Otherwise, the focus becomes the "production" not the "substance" of the course.

One advantage of compressed video is the ability to introduce guest speakers into the class from any facility or location. The convenience expands the realm of availability for experts in the discipline. It is also possible to coordinate and schedule times to access seminars or workshops on satellite. Relevant information can then be videotaped, saved and reviewed at a later date or used as a supplementary resource for the course/program. Computers at each site are connected to the internet and a wide range of research oriented projects can be developed, enabling students to experiment with other forms of technology. Students at several different sites can work together on class requirements or just share their knowledge through e-mail. Similarly, instructors can also maintain daily contact with students through e-mail.

Another advantage of compressed video, reserved for the instructor, is a mechanism to critique one's own teaching style. Each class session is automatically videotaped for distribution to sites to guard against interference of the broadcast due to technical difficulties. By watching the tape, an instructor can assess their performance, compare it with student responses and evaluate the progress of the class. Problems can be identified from this valuable function and techniques implemented to improve teaching skills.

Programs that serve rural and statewide populations can benefit from utilizing compressed video for instructional purposes. An array of creative coursework can result while meeting the needs of students.